

Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

SUMMARY: “MANAGER FOR A DAY” WORKSHOP 2/20/03 ELKADER, IA

Lists of Issues, Concerns, Additional Discussion Notes, and Potential Solutions Discussed

Seven “Manager for a Day” workshops were conducted to obtain “potential solutions” for issues facing the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. These all day workshops, attended by citizens and agency personnel, occurred as follows:

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge:

January 4, 2003, Prairie du Chien High School,
Prairie du Chien WI

January 11, 2003, House of Events, Savanna IL

March 8, 2003, Winona Middle School, Winona
MN

March 12, 2003, Cartwright Center, UW – La
Crosse, La Crosse WI, Interagency Team

March 22, 2003 Onalaska Middle School,
Onalaska WI

Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge

February 20, 2003, Central State Bank,
Elkader IA (evening only)

Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

March 15, 2003 Trempealeau Middle
School, Trempealeau WI

WORKSHOPS: HOW THEY WORKED

The workshops were facilitated by Dr. Onnie Byers or Kathy Holzer, Conservation Breeding Specialists Group, Apple Valley MN, except the Elkader IA workshop was facilitated by refuge staff. Each workshop began with a presentation by Refuge Manager Don Hultman on the

“sideboards” or legal requirements under which refuges must operate, with detailed reference to the “National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.”

This presentation was followed by Refuge Planner Eric Nelson, who gave a summary of 12 public meetings held in August and September 2002 where citizens expressed hundreds of concerns “about the future management of the refuge.” These many concerns were then consolidated into 12 issues that “Manager for Day” participants were asked to address. The issues were printed as one-page “Issue Fact Sheets” that provided background materials and several “major concerns” citizens and staff had expressed about each issue.

The facilitators then began the workshop process by randomly assigning participants to working groups of 6-8 people. The groups each selected 5 of 12 “Fact Sheet” issues that they would address throughout the day. They could add more issues if desired. The exception to this procedure was at Prairie du Chien WI where participants addressed 11 of 12 “Fact Sheet” issues and added others. Groups selected their top five issues for discussion by having each participant place up to 5 “sticky dots” next to his or her highest priority issue written on flip charts. Each working group selected its own facilitator, presenter, recorder, and timekeeper. All concerns, notes, and solutions were entered into laptop computers by refuge staff. At day’s end, presenters for each group told the entire workshop their concerns and “potential solutions” to issues they had selected. Participants were encouraged to listen carefully, know that all opinions were valid, respect each other, not allow one person dominate, and recognize that differences of opinion would be voiced but not necessarily resolved at the workshop.

A Note about the Issues

Workshops held at Prairie du Chien WI, Savanna IL, Winona MN, Onalaska WI, and UW-La Crosse all dealt with the same basic 12 issues related to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Workshops at Elkader and Trempealeau each had issues specific to Driftless Area NWR and Trempealeau NWR, respectively.

Driftless Area National Wildlife Refuge

1. The Issue: Refuge Expansion

Main Concerns

- 1) Should the expansion include other algific slope species?
- 2) Should we proceed and use the 1993 expansion proposal or other alternatives?
- 3) What other protection measures could be considered?

(Added by Group)

- ** Fragmentation issue
- ** Is there a need for gene migration corridors? Is genetic isolation a concern? Human impacts/influence on site genetics?
- ** Alternatives to acquisition? Easements, management practices, conservation program incentives to protect drinking water, algific slopes, etc. (Sink hole reserve program similar to WRP to encourage conservation practices.)

Additional Discussion Notes

- 1) More than Algific slopes, Blufflands should be protected whether there is monkshood or snails on the slopes. Advocate using federal funds to protect state listed species.
- 2) Assumption of always willing seller basis? Yes.
- 3) Use of air photos – word of mouth to determine which counties had habitat?
- 4) Acquisition includes easements and fee

title? Yes.

- 5) Protection needed around existing sites, particularly easement, such as sinkholes – could be included in federal farm bill language coming out now, such as CSP, WHIP.
- 6) Should State DNR and county conservation boards easements or fee title. Under Section 6 funding, state and federal are cooperating in Clayton County. (Darrel Mills) Encourage more!
- 7) Is it realistic to suggest that these snails can be recovered to the point of de-listing? Will some congressional committee accuse the FWS of failing its mission if this isn't achieved?
- 8) Need recognition by county assessors of reduced taxing rates for conservation easements – most are being taxed at agricultural production rates.

Potential Solutions

- 1) Protect and clean up sinkholes through establishing a multiagency and private landowner program similar to WRP, CRP, etc. Are there currently any programs in Whip, Equip, etc.
- 2) Expand/manage to include all sensitive algific slopes species.
- 3) Expand buffer zones to include lands that have connecting sinkhole systems or lands that potentially impact health of algific slopes.
- 4) Landowner incentives.
- 5) Include counties currently excluded from 1993 refuge expansion proposal.
- 6) Refuge size cap should not be a limiting factor, need to be able to respond to future needs and changes on the landscape to protect the resource.
- 7) 1993 acreage expansion proposal should be acted upon and pursued. Utilize easements to protect algific slopes and buffer areas where purchase is not possible.
- 8) Expand the refuge so you have more resource so experimental management alternatives can be tried. If you only have a limited resource the management

alternatives are limited; the more resource, the more variety of management techniques that can be tried to protect the snails and monkshood.

- 9) Protect more "quality" slopes because there may well be other things to discover in the future.
- 10) Yes, protect other species.
- 11) This acreage includes identified sites for the Iowa Pleistocene snail or monkshood plus additional plants and snails like the golden sasifrage, glacial relic snails, silavancia renafolia, it is the preferred alternative.
- 12) 6220 acres could cause concern with some hunters and landowners.
- 13) What about establishing a percentage that could be an easement?
- 14) Acquisition of identified (core) sites is preferred over easements. However, if easement is only alternative that is acceptable to landowner, than use that option.
- 15) Continue to partner with the INHF and Iowa TNC.
- 16) Look for adjacent landowners interested in entering into voluntary management agreements with FWS.
- 17) Expand the refuge so you have more resource so experimental management alternatives can be tried. If you only have a limited resource the management alternatives are limited, the more variety of management techniques can be tried to protect the snails and monkshood.
- 18) Easements and other types of covenants.
- 19) Target farm bill's new programs.
- 20) Buffering and enhancing old sites as well as obtaining new sites.
- 21) Local zoning as another tool for land protection.

2. The Issue: Public Use

Main Concerns

- 1) What public uses could or should be allowed and where?
- 2) What staffing is needed to manage

public uses? (i.e., law enforcement, tour guides).

- 3) How can volunteers be utilized to enhance public use?
- 4) How can public awareness of the Refuge be improved but still protect endangered species?

Additional Discussion Notes

- 1) A lack of available information about the refuge (only a person who visits the McGregor Office would even find about this area).

Potential Solutions

- 1) Motorized uses should be prohibited.
- 2) Expand education outreach efforts. Website, more news releases, better distribution of literature, leaflets. Greater public awareness of fragile nature, balanced with greater public use opportunities.
- 2) Develop a demonstration site (actual algific slope or a site with similar qualities but not sensitive) to educate school groups, public interest groups, handicap accessibility.
- 3) Observation site for wildlife viewing.
- 4) Highest priority is to protect algific slope site – use designated areas for multiple use.
- 5) Add staff to establish and manage multiple use areas.
- 6) No motorized vehicle usage.
- 7) Zones - buffers ok. The slopes are too sensitive to allow them there.
- 8) Exhibits that interpret the slopes and plants.
- 9) Don't call attention to where the algific slopes are located.
- 10) Definitely keep some of best or most fragile units closed.
- 11) No quarrying.
- 12) No skiing or snowboarding.
- 13) If areas are opened or range of allow uses is expanded, staffing must increase to assure protection of slopes.
- 14) Volunteers; monitors, lead small tours; garlic mustard control.

- 15) Kids involved.
- 16) The Driftless Area movie.
- 17) Exhibit at each county courthouse or community library and Wal-Mart so that the uninformed become informed about the value of the algific slopes so they donate their land.
- 18) Spot zoning to protect sensitive areas and allow hunting in less vulnerable portions.
- 19) Increase volunteers, EE process is fine, do more. More!!!
- 20) Clone Kathy to improve public awareness, more exposure especially professional, public.
- 21) Hire additional staff to assist with contacts, coordination and education.
- 22) County engineers need to know about these areas in road construction, ditch cleaning.
- 23) Put sinkholes and algific slopes in new county plans, increase emphasis.
- 24) Permit system for controlled photo access.

3. The Issue: Habitat Management

Main Concerns

- 1) What is an appropriate goal for restoration of Refuge Habitats (i.e., presettlement conditions)?
- 2) Can and should local deer populations be managed?
- 3) How can habitat management fit into the larger landscape, especially for forest songbirds?
- 4) Invasive species, such as garlic mustard, are a concern.

Additional Discussion Notes

- ** Monitoring
- ** Assure management is compatible to core mission
- ** Adjacent land use impacts
 - buffer zones
 - compatible
 - educate cooperate with adjacent land

owners

- 1) Should the forest be opened to allow light in to allow the monkshood to grow.
- 2) Volunteers need to be involved in invasive species control program – pull weeds.
- 3) Presettlement conditions may not fit into scale and scope. Not always reasonable.
- 4) Not many deer in picture before settlement.
- 5) Cooler slopes must have had trees, even with poor soils.
- 6) Buckthorn a problem – needs control. Honeysuckle too.
- 7) Sinkhole protection offsite needs to be addressed in management program.
- 8) Hog, dairy and turkey manure lagoons above algific slopes also a concern.
- 9) Question to Kathy regarding choice of counties for expansion proposal 1993: Why have two counties been excluded? Apparently no occurrences found there. Suggest filling in those counties anyway to correspond to entire presettlement range. Crawford, LaCrosse, etc. (one other).
- 10) How do you determine what habitat management tools to utilize for managing the algific slopes or the buffer zones? Are presettlement conditions actually the best conditions for the slopes to the preferred target, or would alteration of habitat provide a better buffer for these slopes?

Potential Solutions

- 1) Include monitoring of sites as part of management program. Are deer or other native species harmful to algific areas?
- 2) Use best management practices to maintain or promote healthy algific and associated species.
- 3) Consider restoring sensitive or extirpated species in area adjacent to or surrounding the algific slopes.
- 4) Develop comprehensive exotic species control plan (IPM).
- 5) How do we know what presettlement conditions are? Thorough investigation

- of historical information on each site & current species makeup.
- 6) Obviously algalic slope sites were well protected from natural fires.
 - 7) 3 + zones to consider management alternatives: slopes, sinkholes, buffer.
 - 8) Habitat that is already in at least fair condition or snails and monkshood wouldn't be there.
 - 9) Someday try to "restore" an algalic slope that historically had snails and or monkshood.
 - 10) Management plan for each refuge unit.
 - 11) Yes they [deer] should be managed. If so, chase deer out [of sanctuaries]. Continued hunting year after year can reduce local deer population.
 - 12) [Songbirds] On larger parcels, manage buffer lands for a variety of native plants & animals.
 - 13) [Invasives] Try everything - volunteers, pull it, spraying in winter (not on slopes).
 - 14) Volunteer use to control invasives.
 - 15) Deer control requires broader attention within farm landscape, not just on sites.
 - 16) Wolves and cougars both sighted in area last few years.
 - 17) Encourage more hunting in perimeter areas via more education, permit hunt for a fee.
 - 18) May not want to mix permit and fee, access control is important.
 - 19) Easements can be used to expand important bird areas.
 - 20) If uneven aged management of forest is good for slope, it favors certain bird species.
 - 21) Logging on slope may be a concern, but thinning may be needed, especially monkshood.
 - 22) More research is needed to answer logging, livestock, songbird impact questions.
 - 23) Fee shotgun antlerless deer hunt, avoid this area, map and explanation.
 - 24) Fence on contour to cut off deer trails and limit invasives, erosion, etc.